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aargh!

Aotearoa Anarchist Review

Won't Get Fooled Again?



EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest edition of the *Aotearoa Anarchist Review for Gloomy Hypocrisy*.

Since the last edition, we've had a new Prime Minister – and if one believes the mainstream media, everything is great now. We have Jacinda, so there is nothing else to worry about. We will even have our own royal baby soon, at which stage she'll probably be referred to as Diana.

Everything she does is magic – she goes to Waitangi and suddenly there is no one protesting (although the media forget to mention that she never went to Te Tii Marae, where the protests usually happen). She signs the re-branded TPPA deal and instead of the thousands who protested under John Key, there is a group of maybe 80 people.

And look how well she's doing internationally. Emmanuel Macron's resistance to a free trade deal melted away when he saw her, and even Angela Merkel looked unusually relaxed after their meeting.

The graffiti in Paekākāriki on the front page of this magazine says it all. It's not staged, it was there the day after the coalition announcement.

Jacinda calls herself a "pragmatic idealist", which really sums up what social democracy the world over has stood for in the last 120-something years: some nice sounding ideals but when it comes to doing stuff, we better maintain the status quo.

And that becomes obvious in what Labour has started so far: no programme for a real wage increase, instead some changes to tax credits. No targeted programme to lift Māori out of poverty, instead a "universalistic" approach – meaning that Māori will be better off when Pākehā are better off as well. Hardly a real improvement, and it sounds suspiciously like the "trickle down" effect we were promised under Rogernomics. The Waikeria mega prison is still not off the table, but only the "mega" aspect of it is up for debate, it may just be smaller than originally planned. But more prison it will be, because, well pragmatism dictates that prisoners have to go somewhere and at least we're not triple bunking them.

There has been no word on doubling the refugee quota since Jacindamania gripped the country, instead there was a half-arsed repeat of the offer to the Australians to take 150 people from Manus and Nauru.

We will be touching on a lot of these things in one way or another in this issue of aargh!, accompanied by photos from 50 years ago, when in 1968 worldwide protests really challenged the system.

As The Who said back then in their song *Won't Get Fooled Again*: Meet the new boss – same as the old boss.

Enjoy the read and as always –

Love and Rage

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Another struggle is possible!

By Sam Buchanan

IN THE early 2000s a global movement against economic injustice, inaccurately dubbed the 'anti-globalisation' movement was bringing capitalist schemes to a shuddering halt, then it crashed and burned. What happened?

This movement was unusual, it was a truly global movement, with actions taking place from India and Brazil, to Papua New Guinea and the United States. It was also one of the most challenging movements faced by capitalism in many decades. Unlike most reformist movements, it was taking on capitalism at its roots, rather than tinkering around the edges or asking for limited human rights gains. It sought an end to injustices rather than compensation for them. While it had significant support from social democrats, it could almost be called a radical movement.

In the rich world, participants were from many political backgrounds, but anarchists had a strong presence.. The favoured protest methodology: with different 'blocs' representing different forms of protest, spokescouncils for decision-making and a willingness to use confrontational civil disobedience to shut down meetings of organisations deemed undemocratic, fitted well with anarchists. Reformist social democrats rubbed shoulders with radicals, and while many of the former remained critical, others began to sympathise with anti-capitalist ideas, especially as the impacts of capitalism on people in poor countries became better known.

The rich world component of this movement was a long time coming. It had its roots in the Third World solidarity movements of the 1970s, which included political action groups, the more radical aid and development groups and faith-based groups of the 'liberation theology' sort. In poor countries it went back further, to the anti-colonial movements that perceived that newly independent nation-states were still in thrall to an international economic system dominated by wealthy capitalist countries and their proxies, the Bretton Woods institutions, namely the World Bank, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

These 'International Financial Institutions' (IFIs) were founded by rich country governments after World War II to stabilize the global capitalist economy. The World Bank was intended to stimulate development

by lending at reduced rates. The IMF was to provide short-term funding to governments facing balance of payments crises, to ensure that they remained solvent. The General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), which later transmuted into the more powerful WTO, was to stimulate trade by reducing tariffs, initially focusing on rich countries that had thrown up trade barriers. While focused on economics at a nation-state level, this was all relatively harmless until the 1970s when poor country governments found themselves seriously screwed by high interest rates and high oil prices. The IFIs had been captured by 'free-market' political theories and offered funding at a price – the privatization of government services, cuts to government spending and cutting of regulations on business, a package known as 'Structural Adjustment'. The claim that this would increase prosperity proved, unsurprisingly, dead wrong, and poor countries became poorer still, and often hugely in debt.

In poor countries, protests against the IFIs, and against multi-national skullduggery had been going on for decades before people in rich countries began to take notice. But by the late 1980s, meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions, and those of rich country clubs, such as the G7, began to draw protests, sometimes on a large scale.

Ten years on, the protests had become impossible to ignore, with hundreds of thousands participating at the WTO meeting in Seattle in 1999, the G8 meeting in Genoa in 2001, the World Bank/IMF summit in Prague in 2001 and against the European Union summit in Barcelona in 2002. Some meetings were cancelled or abandoned.

At Genoa, and at the European Union meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden, in the same year, firearms were used against protestors, with three injured in Sweden, and one dead in Italy. In Genoa and Prague, armoured vehicles were also used.

The response of the capitalists was to move summits to hard-to-get-to locations, in mountain resorts or in countries with repressive governments, making large-scale protest near to impossible.

Political differences within the movement began to hit home. After Genoa, Marxist groups blamed the anarchist 'black blocs' for violence at the protests, despite the violence kicking off before the disorganized black bloc could even get moving from its starting point. The

mainstream media took up this line and the black bloc was proscribed as a terrorist group in Italy and condemned by social democratic activists.

Marxist groups for some reason seemed rather reluctant to get involved in the movement, I never really figured out why, unless it was the fear that their members might be exposed to too much anarchism. One British Marxist group at the Genoa protest was horrified that their membership rejected the party's plan for a rally with dull placards, and even duller speeches, and insisted on joining the direct action efforts. When the 2003 Gulf War broke out, the group left the movement en masse, claiming this was because the war was a priority, but more likely due to their scenting better recruiting opportunities.

Many other activists did the same, the war had a sense of urgency and spectacle that the slow-motion juggernaut of neo-liberal economics lacked. And the issues and solutions were simpler and less threatening. Demanding your own nation state not go to war is a lot easier than demanding the end to a global system of economic injustice that you might well be benefiting from. On the other side of the coin, some US social democrats suggested protest should be abandoned following the September 11 Al-Qaeda attack on the World Trade Centre, as if the tragedy in New York superseded the larger on-going tragedies in poor countries.

However, it wasn't all doom and gloom. Another reason for the demise of the 'anti-globalisation movement' was its success.

On-going protests at summits were starting to scare the hell out of rich country governments, and they felt forced to make concessions. Poor country governments felt empowered and pushed back harder than before in negotiations. By the 2003 WTO ministerial meeting in Cancún, Mexico, the organization was obviously fucked. Even though protests were smaller, the meeting was abandoned as hopeless when rich world governments pressed demands and poor countries flatly rejected them. The WTO never recovered its momentum, its debates remain unresolved, and it is to this day presumed dead by most observers.

There were other victories. Western governments and multi-nationals backed off from their push to tighten patent laws around medicines, which was aimed to stop countries such as Thailand and Brazil producing and exporting cheap generic copies of patented drugs. South Africa began importing HIV retrovirals from Brazil, and when no action followed, other countries followed suit. The earlier lack of access to these drugs, due to governments fearing repercussions if they ig-

nored the patent laws, has been estimated to have cost 10 million lives throughout Africa.

In 2003 the government of Argentina, previously a favourite of the IMF, refused to pay its debt to the fund, and rejected further loans from it. Other countries followed suit. For a while it looked like global capitalism was in full retreat.

But capitalism never gives up, and with the power of the IFIs broken, governments and businesses turned to bilateral and multi-national trade deals to advance their agenda. In late 2003, New Zealand, Chile, Brunei and Singapore began negotiating the P4 agreement, which later formed the basis for the now re-branded Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement. The US signed a string of bilateral agreements in the years after 2003.

While opposition to free trade agreements continued, it no longer had the wide base, nor the radicalism. Opposition became often nationalistic, sometimes influenced by conspiracy theorists, and was led by social democrats. The continuity, and grassroots activist organizational model was gone, replaced by a top-down structure. Such movements have been largely ineffective. Solidarity became difficult and messy, it was easier to do other things and let the injustice go unchallenged.

Of course, in poor countries, this movement hasn't gone away at all. What crashed and burned was just the rich world movement that attracted the bulk of media attention, but which also genuinely held a lot of power.

One of the slogans of the 'anti-globalisation' movement was 'another world is possible'. The movement never quite managed to demonstrate this, but it did demonstrate that an anti-capitalist movement is possible. It was a bright moment in history, and a sign that if you keep up the struggle, you never know when it will coalesce into something blazing bright.

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Don't hate the media – become the media!



By Peppertree

BASHING THE mainstream media has become a hobby for right-wing politicians these days. But it didn't used to be like that. It used to be the radical left who called the media 'liars' and accused them of biased reporting.

This remains true, of course – the mainstream media represent the viewpoint of the political mainstream. And in times of crises, it becomes the government's mouthpiece (the TVNZ, Herald and the Dompst buildings are on a special power circuit, together with the police, so that if the revolution breaks out, the media can spread government propaganda). But this is simply their role, there is no conspiracy at work, like the populists want to make us believe.

The mainstream media report within the parameters of the 'acceptable' discourse. This currently ranges from ACT to parts of the Greens, but it shifts together with popular opinion. Everything outside of this frame is considered radical, which is synonymous with crazy. Someone warning of climate change ten years ago was considered too radical to even give an inch of column space, whereas now it is a mainstream subject (while any suggestion of how to seriously stop it is still outside the permissible frame). On the rare occasion that a radical opinion is given some room in the media, it is often in the form of a freak show: hey everyone, look at this idiot – they want more public transport instead of a motorway! Which is then a signal to hundreds of trolls to come out of their holes and repeat that sentiment in online comments.

The bias and filtering of the bourgeois media become obvious whenever there is a large protest: either there is no reporting or it is limited to the appearance of the protest, while the purpose and message of it are ignored. In times of shorter and shorter news messages, this has gotten worse.

Every year on Waitangi Day, hundreds of people spend the day debating Tino Rangatiratanga and treaty issues for hours at Te Tii Marae. If during the ten minutes when the PM shows up, someone throws an object then that is what is reported – out of context, making it look like the lonely action of a single person.

Anzac Day protests are also an annual event, but are hardly ever reported on. In 2017, a group of Well-

ington anti-war protesters held up a banner, and there would have been no coverage of it, had it not been for a 10 year-old boy who – after attracting the attention of a TV camera – berated the protesters and accused them of attention-seeking. The tantrum of a spoiled child was more newsworthy than the argument against war.

Unlike the populists today, back in 1999, activists decided to do something about this. When the protests against the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle ("the battle of Seattle") were organised, they set up the "independent media centre" to get the protest voice across. Under the slogan "don't hate the media – become the media", over 400 activists produced hundreds of reports, videos and interviews around the protests, which were broadcast on satellite TV and on the burgeoning internet. They even printed daily newspapers. The internet site was indymedia.org.

Back then, publishing was difficult. In order to reach an audience of more than your immediate friends, you had to be rich. Or you had to say what the mainstream media thought would interest their readers, viewers or listeners. Blogs, messaging services and social media didn't exist. There was no way to share a photo or video online. If the mainstream media didn't report about it, it didn't happen.

Indymedia made it possible for people to be heard. Anyone with access to a computer and a modem could publish articles, news reports and opinion pieces. Uncensored. Having access to video resources and having a publishing platform was a huge thing for many activist groups.

Within a couple of years, more than 100 Indymedia sites sprung up around the world. Aotearoa Indymedia was started in 2002. The main feature of most sites was the open publishing platform, where anyone could publish anything anonymously, as long as it didn't violate the editorial rules. Some sites were moderated to keep hate speech and right-wing trolls out, others, like Aoteaora Indymedia, worked without moderation.

Here in NZ, there were several local collectives who operated the site indymedia.org.nz. In Auckland, during the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, a film "Plan B: Peace" was produced. In Wellington, film screenings

were held and a small zine called 'Windymedia' was produced for a number of years. (Windymedia gained notoriety during the Urewera 4 trial where it was referred to as "the war document" and presented as proof for the militancy of the accused. It contained an anti-war article about Iraq).

The state didn't like all this reporting. During the protests against the G8 summit in 2001 in Genoa, Italy, the police raided the Indymedia centre that was set up to cover the events. In Oaxaca, Mexico, during the 2006 Zapatista uprising, the Indymedia reporter Brad Will from the US was shot and killed.

But it is the open-posting feature that is of most interest to the state, who desperately wants to find out the IP addresses (and the real addresses) of people who post radical opinions or communiques. In 2004, the FBI raided the company that hosted the US Indymedia site, in 2005 the Bristol, UK server was confiscated, just prior to the protests against the G8 summit in Gleneagles. In 2014, the Bristol site was raided again, which led to the end of the Indymedia project there.

In September 2017, the Indymedia centres in Grenoble and Nantes (where there is an ongoing protest camp against a planned airport) in France were raided. In the same month (just before the elections) the German site 'linksunten' was shut down and several activist homes raided. Use of the name, URL or logo of linksunten remains illegal in Germany.

It is quite possible that other raids happened that we don't know about, especially in countries like the US where it is a punishable offence for hosting providers to tell anyone when they have been raided.

In 2018, most Indymedia sites are dead. Some as the result of state repression, most as a result of a lack of interest, both from people using it and from people maintaining it. The Aotearoa site is no different. The site states:

Indymedia is about you. Indymedia survives by having a community of people committed to using it as a source and a vehicle for information and a tool for organising resistance. Indymedia only survives if you use it.

And that is no longer happening – very few people still post articles. It is likely to be shut down soon.

20 years ago, the problem was that radical voices were not published. Today, the problem is rather the opposite. There is so much uninteresting and trivial junk published that it is almost impossible to find relevant material. So the problem is really the same – people who have something to say don't get heard.

But instead of clearly defined editorial censorship we are now faced with obscure corporate censorship. Many protests are now organised exclusively via Facebook events. But if Facebook's algorithm decides that it is unlikely to generate online advertising revenue, it won't pass the Facebook filter. And if it's not on Facebook, it didn't happen.

The purpose of Indymedia is to create a space for the exchange of ideas and information about what is really going on in the world. It is about exposing the truth of global corporate greed and capitalist exploitation. It is about laying bare the reality of the world we live in. It is about creating an alternative to the spoon-fed mass media infotainment that passes for news.

Aotearoa Indymedia

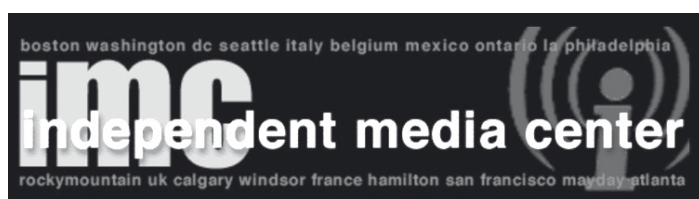
The Indymedia project as a grassroots publishing initiative that allowed anonymous posting has been replaced by Facebook and Twitter – two huge commercial enterprises whose business model is based on extracting as much information as possible from its users and exploiting that

information commercially.

The contrast to what Indymedia stands for couldn't be greater. But the sheer unimaginable financial power of Facebook and Google allow them to provide technical innovations that a small group of unpaid volunteers will never be able to. Back in 1999, when the internet was in its infancy, it was nerdy activists who used the technology to enable people to communicate in new ways.

So people go with Facebook, Twitter etc. The fact that these sites manipulate and filter the information according to their own profit-maximising algorithms and that they work closely with police and spy agencies has become a background concern that is outweighed by the convenience of the tools. There is no anonymity with Facebook and Twitter, everyone (including the state) knows who posts what. The state no longer has to raid servers, it's all on Facebook, and if it's not in plain view Facebook and Google happily hand the data over.

Seems like capitalism has won again. @@@



Ancient Greek Democracy – a toolkit for anarchists

By James Kierstead

IF THE basic problem of democracy is to construct an order that allows us to make decisions and to enact them while (to quote Rousseau) each of us “remains as free as before,” democrats and anarchists might be said to have a lot in common. For many anarchists, too, the basic problem is how to preserve our liberty and equality in the face of the claims of the state.

Supporters of our representative ‘democracies’ have basically made a deal with Hobbes, in agreeing to cede power to an elected body of leaders who make decisions for us and compel us to go along with them. Representative democrats claim this is a legitimate procedure, since the decisions we’re forced to go along with, and the laws we’re forced to obey, are ones we have in some sense consented to.

But that phrase “in some sense” does a lot of work, and there are practicalities that make sure that we only really consent to what our governments do in an attenuated sense. So, for example, we can only vote for the candidates and parties that are available this year; when we do so, we vote for a whole slate of policies, some of which we may not want; and even then, our ‘representatives’ can easily ignore what we want once they get into Parliament.

Is there a way of only having decisions and laws that each of us agrees with and has already consented to? If there was, we could get rid of compulsion by the state altogether. Robert Paul Wolff, in *A Defence of Anarchism*, proposed that there should be a requirement of unanimity for every law passed, and for every decision made. That way, if a law was passed, or a decision made, each of us would by definition have already agreed to it – otherwise it wouldn’t have gone through.

Unanimity rules were widely employed by participants in the Occupy movement, but they have drawbacks. The main drawback is that if everyone has to agree for a decisions to be made, not many decisions get made. A state based on unanimity rules for law-making would be one with very few laws – unless, of course, we have a society in which there’s widespread agreement on what laws there should be. We’d end up, in other words either with a small-state form of libertarianism or with a homogenous, traditional society.

Since neither option would be palatable to many anarchists on the left, some form of majority rule seems necessary. And majority rule means that rather than requiring everyone to agree before a decision gets made, the majority decides what the group will do. That, of course, means that the minority has to go along with what the majority wants; and that brings us away from the society Wolff dreamed of, in which nobody would ever have to do anything that they didn’t agree with.

But it doesn’t necessarily mean that we have to put up with a highly developed coercive state that’s separate from citizens, or that we have to cede huge amounts of our power to a body of leaders. There are ways of organizing a democratic state so that it minimizes authority relations, in which one person rules over another, or at least makes sure that we all get to “rule and be ruled in turn” (as in one Aristotelian definition of democracy). Many of these were used in the world’s first democracies, which flourished between the sixth and the second centuries BC.

The basic institution of every Greek democracy was a Citizens’ Assembly, which would make all the main decisions for the community. Everyone was allowed to speak, and voting was by a show of hands. Not everyone in the average city-state could turn up to an individual Assembly-meeting, of course. Athens, for example, had about 40,000 citizens in the classical period, and no more than 6000 ever turned up to its Assembly. But that’s a better proportion of the citizenry than our modern parliaments represent, and they’re not even open to all comers.

A key issue for a lot of anarchists is agenda-control. Is it unavoidable that this, if not the decision-making itself, will be in the hands of an elite? The ancient Greeks showed that it was not, using a procedure they called probouleusis, which roughly translates as ‘preliminary deliberation,’ along with a little sortition (selection by lot). In democratic Athens, the agenda for the Assembly was drawn up by a council of 500 citizens who were selected by lot from the entire citizenry to serve for one year. Imagine the agenda for parliament being drawn up by random New Zealanders whose names have been pulled out of a hat, and you’ll have the right idea.

A final issue is the interpretation and enforcement of the laws. Here, again, we might expect an elite to form. Doesn't there have to be a body of experts to master the laws? Again, the Greeks showed that this isn't the case. In Athens, citizens were allotted to courts, where they voted on the guilt or innocence of defendants by secret ballot. Laws were generally vaguer than ours, but the final decision was a better reflection of whether the community felt that its standards had been breached than any ruling by a single, unrepresentative judge.

Of course, all of these procedures, common to many ancient Greek democracies, also took part against a shared background of slavery and exclusion. Foreigners were excluded, as were women. Only men of citizen-class could take part, and in Athens this could never have amounted to more than 20 percent of the total population (and perhaps as little as 10 percent). We might well call this shameful, and we certainly won't want to reproduce any part of that sort of exclusiveness today.

At the same time, it's important not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. That ancient Greek democrats had slaves and excluded women doesn't mean that there's nothing we can learn from them. For what it's worth, tens of thousands of Athenians (and thousands of others across the Greek world) managed to make decisions for themselves, and act on them, without a

coercive state apparatus to speak of. (There wasn't much of a police-force to speak of in classical Athens; it consisted of a few Scythian archers).

Anarchists of today might find much of interest in how they did it. They didn't use a unanimity rule, perhaps because that would have hampered their ability to make decisions in a tough environment. (About one third of Greek city-states on record were destroyed at some point.) They did use majority-voting for their main decisions, but they also had recourse to sortition in many of their institutions (including for most of the city's officials). That included for jurors, who effectively had control over how the laws should be interpreted and applied.

Modern groups, of course, will want to make sure that they're inclusive. But they might also want to ensure they make major decisions in a kind of assembly that is open to all (even if not everybody can attend every meeting). They'll want to make sure that some subset of the group has control of the assembly's agenda (and maybe that subset can be allotted). They'll also want to make sure that the rules aren't applied by experts or authorities, but by the community, or a random sample of its members. That way modern anarchists might well revive the best parts of ancient Greek democracy, and leave the worst behind.

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Student Protest in Paris, 1968

The Plebs Strike Back

The Last Jedi

(Colour, 152 mins)

Reviewed by Sam Buchanan

THE LATEST Star Wars pot-boiler has thrown up a couple of interesting things. One is that the pathological fan is here to stay – those being the weird, apparently mostly male, obsessive fans who react to cultural products as if their planet has just been Death Starred out of existence.

They lurk on the internet posting videos of themselves using the latest blockbuster as proxies for all that they consider wrong with society, and whingeing endlessly about it – usually that it's too 'leftist' and, above all, too feminist. They've had a field day with this one, since it has several women in prominent roles and characters who aren't white. One dickhead even released an edited version of the film with the scenes in which women are notably removed, thus ensuring it made no sense at all.

Increasingly, political differences are being fought out over cultural products, people are alienated from the real political arena and debating the politics of fictional creations. I'm open to advice on whether this is a good thing or a bad thing – cultural critiques have been largely the domain of the left for some time, and I'm not sure whether right-wingers moving in is a threat, or a great way to waste these people's time and energy which they might otherwise employ on issues that actually matter.

On one hand, *The Last Jedi* is a throwback to the original Star Wars film – now known as *Episode IV* – the creepy evil people are again in power and the rebellion, which seemed to have won a couple of films back, is again a tiny group of people struggling against all odds with outdated equipment and limited resources. How this is supposed to have happened I'm not sure. The bad guys are now much the same as in the first film too – again we see tension between the military commanders and the Sith, the command chain isn't always functioning properly and personal obsessions are getting in the way of military efficiency. In other words, it is a convincing picture of a military dictatorship. Well, 'convincing' apart from everyone wearing capes, flying around in spaceships and waving swords about.

On the other hand, it puts a turbolaser blast through the standard Hollywood/Star Wars plot devices. For the first time, people sneaking into a well-defended

enemy base/spacecraft/space-station crowded with troops get caught before they can pull a lever to switch off a crucial piece of equipment. A heroic feat earns a demotion. Nobody turns over a new leaf and rejects the 'dark side'. The commander's plan turns out to be better than that of the rebellious critics.

But most importantly, the up and coming young Jedi turns out to not be the son/daughter/relative of some other powerful character. Her parents are 'nobodies'. This isn't just a switch from expectations in the Star Wars franchise, but a U-turn on several decades of capitalist pop culture, ironically heralded by the original film way back in 1977.

Before the late '70s, popular heroes had, for many decades, been mostly 'everyman' characters - Betty Boop, Fred Flintstone, Mickey Mouse, Spiderman, Donald Duck, Popeye, Charlie Chaplin's characters, Sherlock Holmes and Tintin all have less than extraordinary family backgrounds, if any at all. Even James Bond, who, while a social chameleon able to pass in well-heeled culture when needed, shows no sign of being from the aristocracy. Superman's an alien, but was raised on Earth by small farmers. Batman/Bruce Wayne inherited a fortune, but the working class Robin is thrown in to provide somebody average kids could identify with.

That all changed with Star Wars. Suddenly we were back to a fairy story revolving around a princess and a guy who inherited supernatural powers from his father. There's a gamut of princesses, queens, lords, counts, emperors and kings throughout the Star Wars films, and lineage is often crucial for characters.

This set the stage for a whole gamut of other Hollywood aristocrats, 'chosen ones', royalty and others whose 'destiny' is shaped by family background and inheritance. Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings and Disney Princess movies all took us back to the values and principles of feudalism. Heroes are born, not made.

Now *The Last Jedi* gives us a galaxy of commoners, women and people of colour in positions of power. Leia is titled 'General' rather than 'Princess', and even the 'Empire' has had a fascist makeover and renamed itself the 'First Order' - the boss has dropped the title 'Emperor' for 'Supreme Leader'.

It seems Hollywood stories have caught up with the supposedly meritocratic values of 'liberal capitalism'. Is this the start of a trend? @@@

The Pussy Power Palace

An experiment in communal living in Te Whanganui-a-Tara

By Anon

THE PUSSY POWER PALACE is a flat with seven people in it, and we try to live communally while renting in suburban Wellington.

When I first told people that I was living in a house with five other women, I got responses like:

“Oh God, how’s THAT going?”

“What happens when everyone’s on their period?”

“Is someone always on their period?”

“I just personally like living with guys better. They’re so much more straight-up.”

“Women are too catty.”

I didn’t realize that so many women are still afraid of other women, or that the idea of living communally is seen as a childish dream. At the same time, I’ve heard outside friends say: “This flat gives me hope that flatting can actually work.” Which is a big statement, and I figured, maybe sharing the story of what we’ve done and are doing could help as an idea of what’s possible.

The following is an outline of our communal household process, intercut with thoughts from one of my housemates.

Three or four people can make communal living work. As long as they’re sharing and collectively making decisions and keeping everyone in the loop about the functioning of the house – and about their lives, ‘cause that interacts with the functioning of the house so much.

Here’s what communal living looks like for us. Same as any flat we all have our own bedrooms, we split the rent based on how ‘big’ or ‘good’ the rooms are – the tiny bedroom is cheaper than the biggest one, etc. We all put in a set amount to cover our shared costs – electricity, internet. The key step that has defined the house as communal to me is that we share every piece of food in the house.

We sat and talked about what we all like to eat, want to eat and want to share together, and made a list of food we want to keep stocked up in the house. We all put in \$30 each per week, and every week a different person goes to the supermarket and stocks us up.

Someone also does a trip to the market for the whole house. We all have slightly different food needs but we chose to be a vegetarian household. Some of us will drink milk while others rely on nut-milks, some people go hard on spices while I rely on a constant store of bland bread. Sharing the cost of food means we can buy in bulk, we can have things in the house we’d never usually have and definitely would never buy for ourselves alone.

Three nights a week, someone will cook a meal for the entire household. This is such a beautiful process!

We share pretty much everything with each other.

Food and clothes and tasks for the functioning of the house. Money. We give each other a lot of support – logistically and emotionally. I feel like you guys are like my family. We never need to go to the library. We can get shit done faster ‘cause we all do it together.

The way we formed and continue to form the community of the house is through flat hui. We sit together in a circle and before getting into an agenda we share how we are – what’s going on in everyone’s life at the moment? How’s our mental health going? How are we feeling about the flat and each other, what are our needs? This process can sometimes feel weird and stilted or too vulnerable, but as a group of young women living creative and too-busy lives we can go days without seeing each other, and these check-ins are ace. Then we talk through an agenda of things – there’s a flat inspection coming up, who wants to go for a trip to the dump, do we have a roster for the supermarket for the next few weeks? We try and have hui often so that they’re not necessarily in response to an event or conflict, but are ways of catching things as they come up, give people a chance to vent anger and/or love, and reassess what’s working and what’s not. Should we be buying more milk each week?

The make-up of the house right now is – all young (20s), pākehā (with a bit of European parentage thrown in and one token American), mostly queer, mostly strongly feminist, about half ‘left’ and half ‘radical left’, mostly vege-flexible – you get the picture. Sometimes the house feels like a grimy issue of

Frankie magazine, and some of us would love more grime, and some would love no grime at all. I guess the important thing is that we all feel a community is something we want in our home, rather than just a place to live.

Sometimes we all want our own space. Sometimes everyone will be in their own room doing things, but it feels different to a normal flat – where everyone is in their own room and the door is closed and they're cut off and separate. Here you never feel like you can't knock on the door.

Sharing food is great on a couple of levels – if we're all home at the same time, eating together is sweet bonding material. If I come home late, having kai waiting for me makes me feel safe and looked after. Knowing that leftovers are there for anyone, that we can share anything in the house with guests, family and friends who come in. It feels good in a way that's hard to compare to the flat dynamics I'm used to, where you can only touch what's on your shelf, or no, sorry, that's Ben's special soy milk, so you can't drink that.

After multiple clothing-swaps we decided to put a communal wardrobe in place. Clothes we love and want to share with everyone, knowing they'll be respected. I really love seeing my friends wearing my clothes, and wearing an outfit of one friend's pants and another's jersey. The room is an overflowing mess and it helps shape a culture of constant sharing. What is in a communal space is almost always open for communal use. And in a way that isn't secretive.

As I'm writing I realize that all of these steps seem simple and straight-forward and not particularly radical. I think it's important to acknowledge the norms we face when 'flatting' in this city, especially when we have so little money. Strictly budgeting for our own intake of food and resources, and comparing that with other people in the house. Not in a way that is unfriendly, but that we can't help. Our shelves are side-by-side in the kitchen and I know what is yours and what is mine. Half of us in this house are still broke and struggling but our home always feels in abundance – there's always enough food, someone in the house always has what we need and is willing to share it.

I think I expected communal living to be more chaotic than it is. I expected a lot more disorganization – I think I thought you could only do it with heaps of people, more than we have. I think I also expected living with this many people would feel chaotic. Like so many people coming and going and its so crazy all the time, I can't get any peace. But it's actually very chill. We're a very communal house for the people who live here, but there's not a feeling of wider community flowing through the house. Probably because we live in the suburbs.

And for the space that I'm in right now, that's fine. I thought it would be like – that house that always has the door open and friends just pop by. That's not the day to day functioning of it, which is more about the sharing.



Anti-Vietnam war rally in San Francisco, 1968

In reality we've got a beautiful oasis of calm that we live in. That doesn't mean that it's pristine and whatever, but it means that there's so much respect around each other.

Living with women has made me feel much more free to challenge gender norms, and my understanding of my own gender. Living with women has made me feel less pressure to identify strongly as a woman.

I'd love to repeat this in other places I live, and build on it in a way. I'd like to build on it by being able to manipulate the space more. Like shaping the space so that it suits us, not so that we have to fit into it. Being able to build or renovate or build from scratch. I think I'd like to try living with more people as well, and building purposeful communal space that can fit more people. I wonder how that would feel, whether you lose intimacy.

Renting means that your community is defined, to an extent, by one person who owns the house. And by what they want done or not done in the house. We always have to change our priorities to match up with theirs. Right now we want seven people

living in this house, but we'll be evicted if we do, or if we do and don't hide it well. We have to re-shape the house for flat inspections. Renting and communal living works, it's a way to really enjoy renting because it's a cheaper way to do it – cheaper than being solo with your food and what you share. It's also so much more exciting and enriching.

We're the ones who are actually living in this space, so we should be able to make our own mark on it in some way, isn't that what humans do when they live in a space? It would be sad if we spent three or four years in here and when we left, it looked exactly the same as it did in the beginning.

Right now three of our housemates are beginning to move out of the city, and we're thinking about how to welcome new people into our communal culture and how to give them space to re-shape it. Watch this space for a follow-up about managing shifting members of a small community, and for all the answers about facilitating conflict. There's so much we're still learning, but this experiment is ongoing and beautiful and I highly suggest that everyone should share their shit. @@@



A union, student and anti-war protest in Wellington with 7000 people, 1968

23 Days of Autonomy

By Peppertree

SIX MONTHS after the official closure of the Australian-run detention centre on Manus Island, there are still hundreds of refugees holed up there. How did that happen?

Manus Island – a part of Papua New Guinea – has been used by the Australian government as a dumping ground for unwanted people for a long time. Back to the 1960s, West Papuan activists were detained there.

Since 2001 (with a few years pause) the detention centre on Manus – along with a similar one on Nauru – has been used as a means to deter refugees from coming to Australia as part of the “pacific solution”.

Part of that “solution” was that the processing of asylum claims was made deliberately arbitrary and unpredictable. In February 2014, then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd tightened the screws further by announcing the “turn back the boats” policy which meant that no refugee who arrived by boat would ever be allowed to settle in Australia.

This effectively turned Manus and Nauru into dead ends for the refugees, even if they were found to be genuine refugees (which is the case for about 80% of them, according to the Australian Border Force). Only if they could find another country to resettle them, would they ever be able to leave the detention centre.

In April 2016, the PNG Supreme Court ruled the detention centre on Manus to be illegal under the PNG constitution and ordered both the PNG and the Australian governments to end the detention of recognised refugees and asylum seekers. “Treating those required to remain in the relocation centre as prisoners irrespective of their circumstances or status ... is to offend against their rights and freedoms,” Judge Higgins said.

In a separate court case in September 2017, the Supreme Court of Victoria, Australia awarded \$70 million to 1,300 refugees who were held on Manus Island between November 2012 and December 2014, on the grounds of illegal detention and negligent treatment. So, courts in both countries have found indefinite detention of refugees to be unlawful.

As a result, the Australian government announced in February 2017 the intention to close the Manus detention centre by 31 October.

But instead of resettling the refugees in Australia and then shutting the camp down, on 31 October 2017, the Australian Border Force (ABF) literally turned the water and the lights off and left.

They handed out food rations for a couple of days and people on medication were given two weeks’ worth of supplies. Refugees were told to move to one of three “new centres” in Lorengau, approximately 30km away.



Memorial plaque in Wellington for Kurdish refugee Reza Barati, who was murdered in detention on Manus Island in 2014

However, 650 of the 700 refugees refused to go, saying that they didn't want to go to another detention centre. They also feared for their safety after several attacks by some locals. After more than four years in detention, they wanted freedom. They wanted to be resettled in a safe country. Most of them no longer want to go to Australia after the treatment they have received from the Australian government.

Tens of thousands of people in Melbourne, Sydney and other towns across Australia took to the streets in the following weeks in support of the men on Manus. Since then, the refugees have been staging a daily protest – the crossed arms sign has become the symbol of resistance against the detention.

When the guards left the camp, they destroyed as much as they could – water tanks, kitchen equipment, beds. In addition, efforts both by local people and by international supporters to land supplies at the camp were criminalised and made impossible.

Soon the remaining refugees ran out of drinking water. They dug holes in the ground, lined them and directed the rainwater from the roofs into the holes. They cooked what was available on camping cookers. They couldn't leave the compound for fear of being attacked or arrested. But they stuck together and refused to be moved to other camps. For the first time in four years, they managed their own lives. For 23 days they experienced a degree of freedom they hadn't had for years.

What the Iranian journalist Behrouz Boochani writes in the Guardian about this time sounds like a textbook definition of social anarchism:

For these twenty-three days before our violent removal we experienced, for the first time in over four years, some sense of autonomy. But it was not individualistic or rationalistic. Propelled by the deprivation of our liberty, we found an autonomy embedded in social relationships and shared experience. In giving primacy to relations of care and cooperation we did not compromise our autonomy but instead made it possible. We became free only in relation with others. This was compassion, egalitarianism and interdependence in direct opposition to oppression and domination. It was the embodiment of feminist values, but it emerged and was nurtured among hundreds of incarcerated men.

And like many other moments of anarchy, it was brutally squashed. On 23 November, PNG Police and Immigration Officers – under the watchful eye of the Australian Border Force – entered the former refugee camp and started removing people.

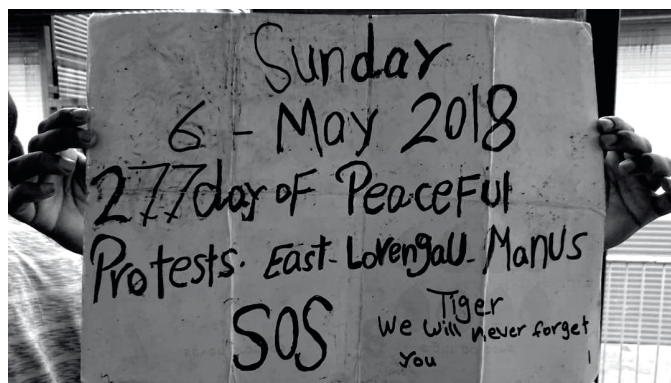
After our first few difficult days without services a democratic system emerged to manage our basic needs. At daily camp meetings we divided the necessary tasks. ... We never had enough food, but whatever we could bring in was distributed according to an egalitarian system. We made numbered lists of the people in each community—Afghan, Pakistani, Rohingya, Iraqi...—so the correct number of portions could be allocated to each group. Those without a national or ethnic community were formed into a group of their own. Sometimes we had no food for three days. But our system meant that everyone had just enough to get by.

Behrouz Boochani

They can be seen on videos destroying everything they find, including food and medical supplies. They demanded phones to be handed over so that the refugees wouldn't be able to film the events. At least two people were knocked unconscious and one of them can be seen lying on the ground in an epileptic fit.

Eventually all inmates were forcefully taken to one of the three Lorengau centres. The refugees were back in detention where their lives were subject to rules and regulations outside of their control. They were back in a prison.

The three camps in Lorengau (Hillside Haus, West Lorengau Haus or the East Lorengau Transit Centre) were praised by the Australian government as “perfectly acceptable”. The truth is, they are anything but. Some quarters are still under construction and sewage flows openly between the buildings. The small medical centre is insufficient and refugees (many of whom require physical and psychological care) have to get treatment at the local hospital, which is already stretched to the limit. The weekly allowance of US\$31 (which often isn't even paid out) is not enough to buy essentials, so some refugees started to sell their food parcels in order to be able to buy their medication.



A UN delegation described the facilities as “incomplete, sub-standard accommodation and unsanitary facilities” and identified a high risk of people contracting diseases. A delegation from Doctors Without Borders was denied entry.

And there is no security. Angry locals, some armed with knives, have been able to walk straight into the buildings. During those incidents, the security guards from a company called Paladin (who was paid \$18 million per month by the Australian government) were nowhere to be seen.

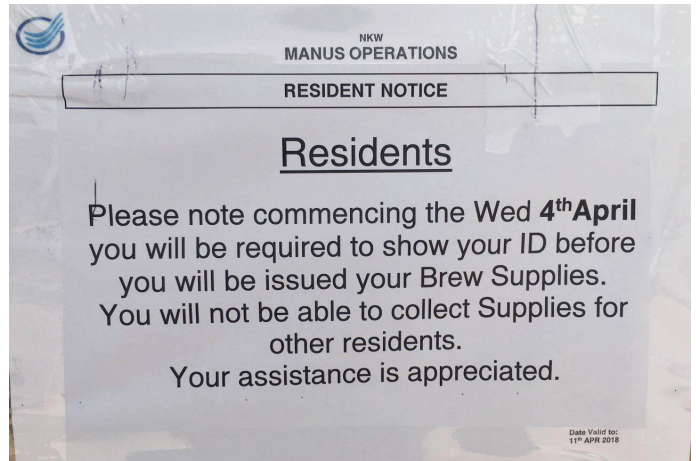
There have been increased hostilities by locals, who are angry that 600 refugees were planted in their village without their consent. There certainly is a degree of racism in this, but resources on Manus are stretched already and 600 additional people in a town of 7000 is bound to cause animosities.

Since December 2017, locals have staged several blockades of the East Lorengau centre, demanding that all Australian personnel be withdrawn and the refugees be removed. Several instances of refugees being attacked, robbed and severely injured as soon as they left the compound have been reported.

Although the Lorengau camps are nominally run by the PNG government, it is clear that local authorities are acting on orders from Australia. This was even stated on notices given to the refugees. And the Australian government seems determined to wear the refugees down.

First, there was a directive that all services (including complaints) were only to be made in English. Translators were no longer available. Then the weekly allowances were reduced. When some refugees resorted to selling their food in order to buy other items, the food rations were also reduced. In April, they were told that medical treatment was only available at the hospital in Port Moresby, a 1.5h flight away, unless they could pay cash in advance at the local hospital.

In recent months, just over 100 refugees have been allowed into the US, where their refugee status is assessed again. This is part of the deal that the Australian government made with US President Obama in 2014, which involved the US taking up to 1250 refugees from Manus and Nauru in exchange for Australia accepting a number of refugees from a US-run detention centre in Costa Rica. The deal became famous when Donald Trump berated Malcolm Turnbull in one of his first official phone calls about how bad it would make Trump look. Since then, Trump has imposed a travel ban on Muslim countries, so that refugees from countries like Iraq, Iran and Somalia are automatically excluded.



ID required to get a cup of tea - one of a number of random hurdles put up to make life more difficult

At the same time, the PNG government has started deporting those who have been denied refugee status.

The Australian government wants to achieve two things. For the Australian and NZ public, they want to give the impression that all is good on Manus and that people are steadily moved off the island and resettled in the US, Canada or elsewhere. In the end they may even take up the NZ offer and resettle the last remaining 150 here. This is to give us the impression that the situation is gradually resolved and to stop us being outraged.

For the refugees, the message is a bit blunter: we will wear you down, no matter how much you protest (daily protests have been happening for over 200 days now). This is done by gradually making the conditions worse, and it will continue to go on. After all, the overall goal is to make the situation so intolerable that the refugees will ‘voluntarily’ return to the war, the persecution or whatever else they fled from several years ago.

Behrouz Boochani puts it into historical context:

This issue must be understood as the annihilation of human beings, the incarceration of human beings within the history of modern Australia; it is a long history, a comprehensive history, it is intertwined with its colonial history. ... A central part of Australia's history relates to its forgotten people. ...

This writing that comes out of Manus is the unofficial history of Australia, a history that will never be authorised by the government.

It is our responsibility to make sure it is never forgotten. @@@

Hurrah for globalization!

The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye
by **Sonny Liew**

Reviewed by Sam Buchanan

HOW DO you describe this thing? It's a radical history of Singaporean politics presented as a survey of the life and works of a non-existent comic artist. It's a stunning piece of story telling, unlike anything I've seen before.

Excerpts of the fictional artist's publications (and unpublished works, scribbles and mock-ups) tell us the history, framed by (fake) autobiographical strips telling the story of an unrecognized life. US National Public Radio called it "probably the greatest work of art ever produced in Singapore".

The history is mostly hidden in notes and politicized versions of comics of the times – Dan Dare, Astroboy, Batman, Tintin and others – in which the characters are replaced with versions of Lee Kuan Yew, his ally and later rival, Lim Chin Siong and others. Newspaper articles and bits of ephemera are included. It's a crazy, messy and fragmented way of telling a messy and fragmented story, so it rings true.

The comic covers the period from the Japanese invasion, through anti-colonial riots, strikes, Singapore's independence, its brief liaison with Malaysia and the crushing of dissent as Lee's People's Action Party takes firm control of the country's political landscape.

Sonny Liew, a Malaysian resident in Singapore, received arts funding to produce the book, which was re-

voked when the content became known. A spokesperson for the National Arts Council said the book "undermines the authority of legitimacy of the Government and its public institutions". You bet it does. It went on to win the English-language fiction section of the 2016 Singapore Literary Prize.

Liew variously draws in the style of Osamu Tezuka, Harvey Kurtzman, Frank Miller, Herge, Walt Kelly, Frank Hampson and other comic greats. Endnotes are provided. Being a comics junkie, I feel it helps to know something about the history of comics to get the hang of everything that's going on. But it might not matter. The book is overwhelming and I'm sure my ignorance of Singapore's history means I'm missing huge chunks of other references, even if I get the comics side of things.

Spinning out from the East Asian arc that is emerging as the world's cultural centre (according to my current pop-sociological theory at least), this is one of those cultural artifacts that draws together the work of thousands of people from around the world over many decades, re-shapes it and squishes out something amazing and totally unexpected.

The global cultural maelstrom that threw up this book is too big to ever fully get your head around, so just dive in and enjoy the ride. You might learn something and your brain will come out a different shape than the way it went in. @@@



50 years on – anti-capitalism protests in France, 2018

